

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs

2010 Achievement Awards

Virginia Association of Counties



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Virginia Association of Counties
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Call for Entries



2010 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2010

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2010.

Program Information

Locality Henrico County

Program Title Teacher Cadet Day at Twin Hickory Area Library

Program Category Customer Service

Population Category (5) 100,001+

Contact Information

Name Gerald McKenna

Title Director

Department Henrico County Public Library

Complete Mailing Address 1001 N. Laburnum Avenue, Henrico, VA 23223

Telephone # 804-290-9050 Fax# 804-222-5566

E-mail gmckenna@henricolibrary.org

Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Mr. Leon Johnson

Title Deputy County Manager for Administration

Signature* 

*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

Teacher Cadet Day At Twin Hickory Area Library Henrico County, Virginia

1. Abstract of the Program

What kind of county program involves Elvis sideburns, silly-string and bubble machines? The staff at the Twin Hickory Area Library in Henrico County, Virginia recently used all of these materials in a workshop designed to get teens pumped about pursuing a career in education.

When the local chapter of Teacher Cadets were seeking space and programming material for their annual meeting, the Twin Hickory Area Library extended its hand. The library not only provided enough space for the crowd of 150+ students, but also addressed the students in a 90-minute workshop that motivated them to become excellent future teachers.

Chris Holliman, a former teacher turned librarian, led the workshop and energetically gave advice on working with children and books. Holliman captivated the high schoolers with humorous anecdotes from his own time as a teacher as well inspiring them with stories of how teachers have changed lives.

The workshop ended with Holliman, wearing Elvis glasses and backed by motivational music, enjoined the audience to take an oath to "teach with passion from this day, to the ending of the world!" He and the staff then sprayed the audience with silly string and bubbles. It was a dynamic finale to a successful partnership between county agencies that greatly benefited area high schoolers.

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2. The Problem/Need for the Program

The Teacher Cadets are a cohort of school groups supported by Henrico County Public Schools whose mission it is to allow young people to explore a career in education. Every year they hold an annual "Fall Institute" in which all the local chapters come together. In 2009, the Teacher Cadets needed two things for their meeting: space and programming material. They also needed both of these things to be free of charge. With over 150 high school students attending the event, finding a place and someone to speak to the students was a real challenge.

Sharon Wamble, a teacher at Godwin High School and faculty leader of the Teacher Cadets, contacted possible hosts over six months in advance. Henrico County's Twin Hickory Library fielded her request and was immediately receptive to the idea. With a large meeting room that could hold up to 80 people, the library was able to accommodate the Teacher Cadets by splitting them up into a morning and afternoon session. Of equal importance, the Twin Hickory Library staff put together a workshop that provided not only instruction on how to be an effective teacher, but also inspiration as to why teaching is a worthwhile calling.

3. Description of the Program

The main objective of the "Teacher Cadets at the Library Day" was to provide an informative and fun day for area high schoolers considering entering the teaching profession. The library staff began planning the event six months in advance by booking the large meeting room and putting programming material together.

On the day of the event, the students entered a large library meeting room. Adrienne Minock, the Young Adult Librarian, did an introduction for the library and the services that it could offer teens. She then introduced Children's Services Library Assistant Chris Holliman.

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Chris warmed up the audience by having them “Shake Their Sillies Out” to the children’s song of that name. The teens were initially skeptical, but soon were enthusiastically shaking and moving to the children’s music. “Why do you want to teach?” he asked the crowd after the music died. To warrant the question, he recounted some humorous "horror" stories from his teaching experience. “Being a teacher was the worst experience of my life!” he joked. “You don’t teach for the money or the fame. So, why do it?”

Chris let the question hang in the air and then introduced "The Pyramid of Power," which was a six step plan to dynamically introduce reading into a raucous classroom environment, including such steps as "reading with passion!" Afterwards, Chris put “The Pyramid of Power” into action by having volunteers perform a skit in which a teacher must tame an unruly class.

Students were then broken up into groups and asked to do an "American Idol Story time," in which they showcased their elementary classroom reading abilities in front of a panel of judges. The teens cracked each other up by showcasing their best version of “If You’re Happy and You Know It” or by doing their best job of reading “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.”

Chris then returned to the question that started the workshop: why teach? He informed the audience that despite many challenges, teaching was a meaningful vocation very much worth pursuing. He related a few stories of teachers from across the country that had changed young people’s lives for the better. “Teaching kids is power,” he concluded. “Inspiring children to read is power... Good teaching makes good people. And it's not easy. But making a real difference in this world never is.” As motivational music filled the room, the presentation ended with Chris making the students take a vow: I Swear... / To be a reading role model / To the children of the world / Although my skin may betray me / Although my stomach may make funny noises / I pledge always to use the Pyramid of Power / To introduce reading into the

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lives of children / And to abstain from anything involving Miley Cyrus, Paris Hilton and Britney Spears / I further vow to teach with passion / And to read with passion / From this day / To the ending of the world!!!!!!!

Hidden bubble machines then filled the air with bubbles and members of the library staff shot silly string at the teens. The workshop ended to enthusiastic applause.

4. Use of Technology

The use of technology was a small but important element in setting the mood of this event. A laptop computer was hooked up to a large projection screen to display a Powerpoint presentation for the students. The workshop leaders also pumped in music into the meeting room using the room's installed surround sound. Both the presentation and the music created an atmosphere of energy and fun.

5. The Cost of the Program

Costs for the program were minimal. Staff time (approximately 20 hours.) was the largest expense. Some supplies (silly string, bubble juice, batteries) were bought for the program, but added up to no more than \$20. As the Teacher Cadets did not have funds to contribute to this event, it was paramount that the Twin Hickory Area Library staff keep costs as low as possible.

6. The Results/Success of the Program

The "Teacher Cadets at the Library Day" was a great success. By the end of the program, a casual observation by library staff told them that the workshop had been a fun and informative event for the students. As Twin Hickory manager Hillary Burns commented, "It was clear that both students and teachers enjoyed the presentation."

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In addition to casual observation, workshop leaders assessed the event through informal interviews. They spoke with students and Teacher Cadet Faculty leaders to measure their level of satisfaction with the event. By the end of the interview process, the staff at Twin Hickory felt strongly that the Teacher Cadets were more than happy with how the day had gone. Perhaps the strongest praise came from Teacher Cadet Faculty leader Sharon Wamble who enthusiastically promised that they would return next year for a similar program.

The "Teacher Cadets at the Library Day" owes its success to the collaboration between county agencies working towards benefiting area high schoolers. Henrico County Libraries and Public Schools partnered to give 150 students an exciting day and a glimpse into the profession of teaching.

This partnership worked successfully because both agencies are aligned in their values in supporting the intellectual development and curiosity of young people. The high schoolers who attended the workshop were allowed to not only explore their interest in entering the teaching profession, but also learned that the local public library is a dynamic and uplifting place. For their part, the staff at the Twin Hickory Library learned that a pair of Elvis sideburns, bubble machines, some silly string, and an impassioned librarian makes for a great program.